

**Presbytery of Yellowstone  
Leadership Cabinet (LC) Meeting Minutes  
May 11,2021  
Via Zoom**

Acting Moderator Julie Boksich called the meeting to order at 0930.

**Present:**

Jamie Schmeling  
Margee Smith  
Suzanne Bratsky  
Russ Kline  
Julie Boksich  
Dave Thompson  
Chuck Carlson  
Ric Tieman

**Absent:**

Teresa Kendall  
Susan Thomas

**Also present:**

George Goodrich, Co-General Presbyter  
Kathy Goodrich, Co-General Presbyter  
Jim Tarr, Stated Clerk  
Melissa Bell, Asst. Stated Clerk  
Caroline Fleming, Stated Clerk nominee

1. **Opening Prayer** – The opening prayer was given by Dave Thompson, Psalm 92.
2. **Quorum** – Quorum was declared present.
3. **Introduction** – Caroline Fleming, the Stated Clerk Search Committee’s nominee was introduced.
4. **Docket** – The docket was accepted with adjustments.
5. **Dwelling in the Word** – Acts 1: 1-11, led by Margee Smith. Silent reflection time followed by discussion.
6. **Co-General Presbyter report** - See written report. Highlights:
  - Reflections, Questions, Observations, Unlearning and Relearning, God’s Invitations and Opportunities
  - Keeping the main thing the main thing, what does this look like in practice?
  - What might be going wrong?
  - Spiritual wins from the year; being refined, growing, asking why. Need for holding onto what is good. Seeking God in the present, Looking to God for the future.
  - Feeling there is need for meeting again in person, a retreat was discussed. It was decided to add time to the next meeting on June 8<sup>th</sup> and gather in Bozeman at Goodrich’s with Zoom option. The added time to be used for discerning in the Holy Spirit where God is leading us.
7. **Presbytery Meeting** – May 21-22<sup>nd</sup> via Zoom, see flier. “Reconnecting our Churches with our Communities” Guest speaker: Rev. Shannon Kiser
  - Video from Shannon Kiser was viewed.
  - LC members were asked to promote the meeting in their congregations.
  - } Kathy, Ric, Suzanne to come up with talking points for promoting.
  - } Julie will cover Phillipsburg, Deer Lodge, Anaconda, Dillon

- } Caroline will cover Miles City and Forsyth
- } George will cover Jordan, Wolf Point, Poplar, Colstrip
- } Russ will ask for assistance from Waine Milmine to cover Hysham, Forsyth
- } Ric and Suzanne will cover FPC Bozeman
- } Melissa and Margee will cover FPC Lewistown, Stanford
- } PMT members will be asked to help cover their churches too

**8. Stated Clerk Search Committee** – Chuck Carlson reported that the salary figure was decided to start at \$19,500 with potentially raising to \$20,000 after the six month Review. Caroline would start June 1<sup>st</sup>. A by-law set aside was requested to accommodate Caroline for a different installation date.

**9. Motions and Special Called Presbytery Meeting** – Meeting scheduled for June 3<sup>rd</sup> at noon via Zoom

>**Motion:** The LC concurs with the Stated Clerk Search Committee request for a by-law set aside of Election and Installation dates with the election May 21<sup>st</sup> and installation on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

>**Motion:** LC joins with PMT in calling for a Special Called Presbytery Meeting on June 3<sup>rd</sup> at noon via Zoom with a shared docket.

>**Motion:** The Special Called Presbytery Meeting will be announced at the May meeting and posted no later than the morning of May 24<sup>th</sup>.

The three motions were taken as a whole and all approved.

**10. Personnel** – Report from Chuck Carlson. They are looking at writing a whole new set of policies based on the recommendations from the review that is done by Associated Employers.

**11. Higher Education Grants** – It was suggested that we limit the presentation times at our meeting by having the applicants submit a pre-recorded presentation for us to view ahead of time. At this time Daniel Triller has not been able to develop a proposal from Montana tech.

} Sub-group of Russ, Teresa, Julie will put together information about this and contact the applicants.

} Teresa Kendall will send Dwight Welch’s video to everyone for review before the June meeting.

**Treasurer Report** – See written financial report from Ric Tiemen.

88% of Per Capita has been received. We are \$25,000 to the good for the first quarter. There was a \$7,000 gift given to the Camp Fund.

Intermountain Children’s and MAC grants will be made in June. A Dream Team Tech Grant was made to Ennis for \$2000 to be used for a new

Computer printer. Julie expressed the gratitude and appreciation of the Big Hole for theirs.

} Ric will advise the accountant of the changes for the Stated Clerk payments. The current will end May 31<sup>st</sup> and the new will start June 1<sup>st</sup>.

} Kathy, Ric, Chuck to assist Caroline with all the employment documents needed for Caroline.

**12. LC Minutes - > Motion:** To approve the minutes from the April 13<sup>th</sup> meeting as presented. Approved.

**13. Stated Clerk Report** – A written report will be done for May Presbytery meeting.

Attended the Synods Clerks meeting on April 26<sup>th</sup>. 1/3 of the Stated Clerks are changing in our Synod.

There is a probable request coming from St Andrews about their need to repair/replace the roof. The expected cost is around \$35,000.

This amount will need to be borrowed; they are looking at several sources.

Rep/Nom will need to be advised that they need to nominate a new delegate to the Synod Assembly for the next two-year term as Jim is moving off.

Rep/Nom will also need to find nominees for the vacancies in PMT; two MWS and one RE.

It was recommended that our GA commissioners from last year be our delegates next year for the meeting in Salt Lake City to have the experience.

Beginning transition work with Caroline. Other staff will need to be involved.

**14. Other Business** – Discussion about the designation for the Special offering, several suggestions were made, but it was agreed to go with the Camp Scholarship.

> **Motion:** That the Special Offering from the Presbytery Worship go to the Westminster's Camp Scholarship Fund. Approved.

The dates for reports to be submitted to the Presbytery office prior to the Presbytery meeting was discussed. As submission methods have changed

It is no longer necessary for 10 days ahead. Proposals of 48 hours or 5 days in advance of meeting. Think about realistically; a decision to be made

At the next meeting.

**15. Next Presbytery Meeting** – May 21-22<sup>nd</sup> via Zoom

**16. Next LC Meeting** – June 8<sup>th</sup> in Bozeman and via Zoom

**17. Thanks** – Thanks were expressed to Jim and Melissa for their service the last three years.

**18. Adjournment** – Meeting was adjourned at 12:34 p.m. with prayer from Jamie Schmeling.

## ATTACHMENT A

### Co-GP Report to Leadership Cabinet, Yellowstone Presbytery, George & Kathy May 11, 2021

#### Reflections, Questions, Observations, Unlearning and Re-learning, God's Invitations and Opportunities

In these times, we need to cultivate the gifts and practices like the Tribe of Issachar, “those who [1] *had understanding of the times*, [2] *to know what Israel ought to do*”. (1 Chr 12:32). [Contextual Intelligence, Leonard Sweet & Michael Beck.]

Individually and jointly, we have been adapting and making time to prayerfully wait on God, reflecting, seeking to listen to the Spirit as to what God may be up to? What the Spirit may be saying and guiding us to do and be. We know each of you have as well and we have asked and sought the Lord together.

In the midst of the swirling currents and circumstances, with a dizzying rate of change and challenges, God is calling us to recognize that we, like Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery, are at the top of Lemhi Pass where we can no longer “Canoe the Mountains” as we have canoed the rivers in flatter territory up to now.

Furthermore, like Lewis and Clark and the Corps, even the ways we have come to understand and been able to pursue our mission, to discern who are the best equipped to scout and lead for this new terrain and season, need to be reassessed, down to the root intentions of our sacred mission. It must be reinterpreted, adapted, contextualized for the new realities of

where God has placed us *now*. [Tod Bolsinger's, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*.]

In such times, how are we to make sense of things, to love God, one another, and all others well, just as Jesus loves us? This is Christ's command and THE way the world knows we are Christians.

What does it look like in practice to "keep the main thing the main thing" which is Jesus Christ and the Good News, growing more in love and like him, making disciples and joining in his mission?

*Since we did our usual comprehensive overview report last month, below we have listed some of our musing, thinking of the present and future over the last 14 months.*

### **Strategic Questions, Reflections and Planning for Yellowstone Presbytery Leadership:**

- 1) How has the pandemic and other shifts and forces such as the "Us vs Them", divisiveness and culture of contempt over the last 14 – 18 months changed:  
our culture, communities, churches, relationships, us, ...
- 2) How has the pandemic changed the ways Yellowstone Presbytery does ministry?
- 3) What new opportunities/possibilities are/might emerge now and in the hybrid era?
  - A. Being less building centric and limited, and scattered and decentralized in smaller groups in homes, various locations & more focused on listening to, serving, loving in the community
  - B. Being less limited by geography (internet = connecting with almost anywhere) People travel or move and still attend or visit a congregation or attend a group.
  - C. Being less time bound
- 4) What are some of the losses, tensions, frustrations?
- 5) What new ministries are emerging / might emerge opportunistically in the Hybrid era?
- 6) What systemic changes might we make to support existing work that should continue, or be adapted, or start?
- 7) What are ways which sustain and develop deeper generosity practices in disciples?  
What are the financial implications and new patterns and practices in an age of hybrid ministry?

### **During the Pandemic YP has adapted in a range of ways, including-**

- 1) **Adapted to a hybrid form of meeting, in person for some and most by zoom**
  - a. All LC, PMT, Presbytery and committee meetings were handled by zoom or cell phone
  - b. Results:
    - i. Better participation because travel time and costs were diminished
    - ii. Meetings could be quickly called and held
    - iii. Some things have been diminished or lost in not being physically present.  
How have you been affected? Thoughts?
- 2) **GP's shifted focus, adapted priorities, expanded capacities with unlearning and relearning, and curtailed travel**
  - a. New and ongoing adaptation of priorities and capacities to live our vision included:
    - i. researching changing realities of all kinds and sharing facts, changing laws and advice, new ways of leading and being church, adapting mindsets and systems to be more flexible and responsive in changing conditions

- ii. networking locally, state-wide, denominationally, and nationally in various networks Kathy has attended, as able, the zoom meetings of Mid Council Leaders via zoom
- iii. resourcing/training/equipping leaders and pastors regarding new opportunities such as for grants of various types, new virtual opportunities and how's, times to share questions, best practices, insights.
- iv. Discerning the times and where the Spirit is at work, adapting, experimenting
- v. Increased need for deepened, authentic, safe community and connections pods of various sorts, prayer cluster expanded, Montana Clergy group (ecumenical) George was asked to convene – continuing strong after a year
- vi. Increased need for spiritual support and pastoral care of pastors, their families and church leaders
- vii. Being available for a wide range of needs of pastors and leaders as there are more rough patches, painful losses and encounters and conflict and anger and outbursts experienced by leaders and in churches.

***KEY** – Many things spotlighting the immature state of discipleship and spiritual maturity in some folks in our congregations as it seems the loud voices, media and values of our contentious culture is more formative than the mindset/attitude of Christ (Phil. 2) Christian discipleship, relationships, and practices as they have been experienced up to now. Sobering, is damaging the witness of the church, leading to large numbers of pastors leaving the ministry (29% of pastors in credible survey said they have, are or have seriously considered leaving the pastorate), and to God's opportunities for repentance, and DEEP change.*

- viii. Learning and ongoing adapting of new technology and social media skills
- ix. Prayer, prayer and gratitude and more prayer.
- b. Relied on long-established relationships and trust, which we could do for a while. Deepened some existing relationships, developed some new ones with folks in the presbytery and as PMT interviewed pastor candidates and other ways
- c. Preached and led worship in some churches by zoom/ others in person and by Facebook
- d. Worked exclusively from home, on cell phone, computer, and internet, sometimes small 1-1 or tiny groups. Travel picking up a little the last months as COVID scarce or gone from many more rural MT counties now.
- e. Study of our current and future needs as a presbytery staff, congregations, leaders, physical and/or virtual office is being discussed. Laptop computers for all staff as opposed to \$5,000 per year in rental and other costs?

### **3) Pandemic Addressed:**

- i. GPs worked closely with other Montana Denominational Heads to synchronize and coordinate efforts.
- ii. Presbytery equipped Churches initially to:
  1. Follow Covid guidelines from state and local governments, the PUCSA resources, with information posted to website and in zoom seminars, small group settings. (Kathy led this effort)
  2. Listened, listened, prayed, and reflected and listened, to you all, PMT and leaders in the presbytery and its churches and ministries.
  3. Helped churches navigate going on Zoom or Facebook for virtual worship and helped to move toward hybrid worship
  4. Offered encouragement and a “with you in this” presence, listening, prayer, making connections, suggestions....

5. Encouraged, offered options and resources and left as much as possible to the sessions of the local church to figure out *in their context*...
  6. CRE Equipping and fellowship happens once a month by Zoom, led by JP Carlson and George
- iii. Presbytery Meetings
1. The planning team, staffed by Kathy, worked strategically to transition the meetings from in-person to *virtual* equipping, fellowship, worship, business gatherings and to listen as to what are root needs and opportunities.
  2. We were able to take advantage of experts who were available from around the country, who were much more readily available on shorter notice because they did not have to travel.
  3. Participation was generally up across the presbytery because of the convenience of zoom.
  4. Travel and lodging expenses were saved for presbytery & churches...
  5. Regional meetings – in person and virtual for equipping and fellowship, begun prior to the pandemic gathered people safely and less expensively.
- iv. The Morphing of Regional Clusters (vehicle for fellowship, study, prayer, spiritual growth, mutual support, relationships & connections):
1. The three of the four regional clusters folded... In person & traveling was instrumental; but with the increasing pace of life in general some were already fading before the pandemic. The Prayer Cluster in Central MT continues virtually. It had already adapted to primarily phone meetings and expanded to include a few others interested in their focus.
  2. Emerging MT Clergy Discernment Gathering weekly Zoom (George Leads) – 11 of our clergy, retired and actively serving attend regularly (Susi Ennis still attends); 10 other ecumenical or PCUSA out-of-presbytery pastors also attend regularly.
  3. Jim Edwards, prof-retired in NT at Whitworth joined us for a session, and the group would welcome him back & others.
  4. Gathering Elements (Model for on-going ministries?)
    - a. Biblically, Lectionary focused
    - b. Guided study and collegial support in large and small groups.
    - c. Prayer and support for each other
    - d. Meeting weekly in prescribed time of 1 hour and 20 minutes.
    - e. One leader (George) with Spiritual Direction experience. Pastor's voiced that it is nice to be led after leading so much themselves.
    - f. Some talk of an in-person retreat. Some visiting each other when traveling. Ecumenical relationships viewed as a plus
  5. Effectiveness noted:
    - a. Lutheran Bishop is asking that we help establish a second ecumenical Pastor Group.
    - b. Our Model is being adopted by the UMC Men in the Northwest for interest-group fellowships

**4. Ideas, Possible options: “We are a reformed church, always reforming...”**

- a. **As we are guided by our Presbytery Vision Statement, how are we to embody it now? Ongoing evaluation of it as a part of our practice.**

Are our supporting initiatives, program and structure what best facilitates and support the Vision?

- b. **Research trends emerging in culture & churches and presbytery ministry** across the country and our region.
- c. **Identify and convene those with the gifts, callings, passion to explore and form “Fresh Expressions of Faith” which may be tethered to an existing church, or on their own.**  
Younger generations & those outside the church are NOT “returning” to what damaged them or what is foreign to them. They are most likely to attend something new, highly relational.
- d. **All Presbytery Meetings and committee meetings be hybrid.**
  - i. Regional meetings for equipping and fellowship be hybrid.
  - ii. Continue to ‘zoom in’ resource folks, not have them in person unless close by.
  - iii. Include a brief element in technological training in each meeting, or perhaps periodically for those needing it, to equip and inspire local pastors and congregations as to what can be possible and how.
  - iv. Continue to rethink how meetings are hosted/purposed/etc... Keep reforming
- e. **Once or twice a year have hybrid presbytery-wide retreats** for worship and community but focus on getting together.
- f. **Presbytery Mission:**
  - i. Form virtual relationships with churches and pastors elsewhere
    - 1. Such as... Paul and Lydia Nashangwe and or a Zimbabwe Church and pastor (Lydia is first female moderator of their presbytery!)
    - 2. Across racial lines with a presbytery, such as Atlanta.
    - 3. Create an interested team to interface with these other entities on behalf of the presbytery.
  - ii. Jackie Harada and her virtual Sunday School be expanded through the presbytery, and hybrid as the classes move back to meeting in person
  - iii. VBS. Hybrid so that youth leaders can zoom in for a teaching time while locals plan the activities
  - iv. Explore and develop closer ties with the Dakota Presbytery, particularly those congregations within our bounds. How best support Poplar and Wolf Point in this?
  - v. Continue to interact with PCUSA Synod of the Rocky Mountains Presbyteries to find others who are leaning into the Hybrid way of meeting and ministry.
  - vi. Continue and expand CRE equipping for preaching, pastoral care and church leadership in our context.
- g. **Continue the MT Clergy Gathering** and create other virtual venues; retreat once a year when travel is less restricted.
- h. **Update personnel policies and staff job descriptions to** reflect new emerging virtual and distanced ways of operating along with ministry and changes in employment laws.
- i. **Plan to steward resources and the earth**
  - i. What staffing do we need, and /or afford to accomplish the presbytery ministry?
  - ii. Be strategic about travel
  - iii. Friend-raising / stewardship planning for presbytery and churches.
  - iv. Rely more and more on website to communicate and resource and train people to use it.

j. **Other Ideas????**

Approved September 8, 2021